



STAR TREK & SUCH
BY

GERALD LOCKLIN



akbar

if his tutor told him once
he told him twice that
even in the omforsaken orient
it was the age of gutenbergr and
nobody not even mogul kings
were going anywhere without
they learned to read and write ...

he never mastered palmer
method or dynamic reading skills,
preferred to ride and box
and listen to the old men
late at night unleash their
duo-worldly word hordes;

in spite of which the
sages write that at an
early age he quite humanely
ruled an empire, outfoxed
the jesuits, tripped out on
acid at his leisure, razed
the arrogant with one karate
chop and, with his left hand,
soothed the anguish of the humble.

the prince

do you like frogs?
neither do i.
i bet that we have
sexual compatibility.

because i don't like
ogres either, and i can tell
a handsome-prince-girl
when i see one.

of course i may not seem
an enchanted prince, but
you have not yet kissed
the place the gray

witch of the northeast
cast a spell on. sure,
go ahead, whatcha got
to lose?

my life began in 1964, when the beatles saw her
standing there, yeah yeah yeah ...

i was standing in the shower, playing with myself
as usual (and comfortably lubricated with
an iridescent soap)

and then i saw her standing there, impeccably
cockney in the boots of innocence and, only
seventeen, the rictus of experience ...

i knew my long-suffering wife was in the other
room, rehearsing for the christmas pageant.
i knew my kids were in the other room, re-
hearsing a dirge for their father's phallus
(they planned to send it, lavishly beribbon-
ed, out to sea upon a laurelled barge)

and what i wondered was -- what am i doing here???

and so i walked quite naked as a cauliflower from
the shower and into the london of elizabethan
extravagances,

wore my heart upon my sleeve and found it taken
as the badge of a true befeater, picked up
shills in piccadilly just to pinch my lily
ass until the day that i was finally con-
vinced i was again alive; when once my name
was slatternly impugned by liz's premier
courtier i ran the upstart through and had
his beaver head impaled upon the royal t.v.
antenna.

shortly thereafter i became the queen's lover.
to everyone's amaze i demanded exclusive
rights, to which she readily acquiesced.

i served her well in love and war; am best re-
membered for a sequence of outrageously
conceited sonnets.

musée des misérables

they say that you can learn from adversity.
you can. what i learned is that there is a god,
and that he is malignant. i learned it on
a trip to the supermarket in my

miserable clunker. to drive two miles
in that atrocity of withering valves
and shameless misalignment is an
ever-renewable rite de passage. picture

then my wrath upon arriving there
with neither money nor a checkbook.
consider my dismay back on the road
as steam begins to seep from its benighted

nostrils. make it to the service station
just to scald my hand. i curse, of course,
and getting in the car i rip my pants
my only pair, because the springs are coming

through the seat. and god has both foreseen
and probably ordained the whole of it.
ah, about suffering they were never wrong,
the old comedians. they knew it happens

in a taxi or a bakery or cleaning
a chimney. and what is worse they knew it
will defeat us: the kingdom lost for a horse; the
poem for a ball-point pen; love, for a contraceptive.

sunset fats

one of my neighbors at the beach has been pestering
me for weeks to write a poem about him.

his name is joe god's truth but because he's the only
guy at the beach with a bigger beergut than mine
they call him sunset fats.

he wouldn't be a bad guy except for always saying
stupid things like telling girls he wants to
make that their hair is ratty as a coon's which
might work in the mouth of a brando or a cagney
but which doesn't get joe anything but shit on.

tries to play pool but scratches on the eight
to play volleyball and always lands on his
gut to woo an ugly rich girl and she
marries a queer.

so here is my poem:

joe you are a bore
joe you eat shit
joe you are a loser and i don't feel compassion
joe when you move next week it will leave
absolutely no ellipsis in my life
joe the only good thing i can say about you is
that you once introduced me to a girl with
truly himalayan tits.

christmas at sunset beach: a sequel

starved for seasonal pyrotechnics, the young
assassins (who would have preferred to detonate
a berkeley or a white house) have blown the oil
refinery to kingdom will not come.

the sky hangs black above the chanukah bush.
a weather satellite caroms in its obscure
orbit towards el bethlehem, where, in an
aluminum kibbutz, a child is born with one eye.

nobody raises an eye from the ed sullivan show.
the mormon tabernacle choir is chanting
god save the king. and i, i am getting
it through my thick skull that jazz is dead

with coltrane, religion with pope john,
contemplation with the mahareshi, the
corrida with arruza, america with
malcolm x, and maternity with the mothers

of invention. love died last week at
a love-in, baseball with mickey mantle,
poetry the early morning that i polished up
my elegy for coltrane and the girl with braces

that i didn't want to bang. my friends and i are
clever as devils and write a lot of poems --
ornamental, bright, symmetrical as christmas
trees -- but poetry is dead.

we go through the paces now, hoping
it is just a temporary imbalance of the
endocrines and that a year from now we'll
be embarrassed by these meanderings.

meanwhile, it should be a great year for nostalgia.
(who, for instance, wrote the lone ranger???...)

Star Trek

She must in early adolescence have had
bad skin because her face is slightly scarred.
Otherwise she is a flower, a bruised
and unforgetting flower, apprehensive

of being plucked. and scared to death
of withering on the vine. Tonight she is
no flower. she is a bird without a song,
a bird whose song civilization has muted.

This afternoon she thought she was
a courtesan at Akbar's palace, learned
in the arts, esteemed alike by warriors
and wives and poets. At any rate

she'd like to be a whore of some degree
but vestiges of pedigree have kept
her a virgin. Tomorrow morning she will
put on blinders and a college sweatshirt.

This once the prudes are right -- deflowering
will be the death of her, anti-climax
of twenty years of preliminary play,
a sofa agony, Star Trek on the telly.

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it is the third movement of my second
piano concerto (the only one that i
have yet begun) and in it acquiesces
the fleugelhorns of the ghetto and

a white boy in a sailboat doing no one
harm. in development i take
the keys to the kingdom, the key
to the city, and the ring of the nibelung

and melt them down to rather dull molecules. with the vanishing of the applause a single sitar introduces the lament of the ten wise urchins for their

incense. by this time the audience has passed out. i wake them with a mauve glissando victory march. cheering follows. a movie screen informs the audience that i am deaf.

Beer

-- for Ron Koertge

It takes a lot to get you there, but it won't kill you either.

Kids like it. The foam makes a fine mustache. When they go to sleep they dream of goofy pink dragons and slippery little smiling fish.

To the adolescent it is the first taste of the earth's bitterness. He has to pretend it gets him high. He is afraid it will give him zits, and maybe it will. He gives it to his girl and thinks it is because of it she gives herself to him.

She doesn't like the taste of it and never will. She doesn't have the thirst for it. She is afraid it will give her a gut, and maybe it will. Eventually she'll be a little insulted when it's offered her. And probably should be.

But the best of friendships are formed over it. It helps men to speak to each other, a difficult thing these days. It lets men sing without embarrassment of auld lang syne and of the sheep that went astray somewhere along the line. It goes excellently with pool and pickled eggs, beef jerky and baseball games. Contrary to popular opinion, it is good for the kidneys, affords them exercise. It is good for all the appetites.

We all go beyond it; we always come back to it. It is the friend who eases us through our phylogenous ontogeny. It is the friend we talk to about our women, the one who agrees with us that they are not all that important. It

restores our courage in the face of cowardly
sobrieties. It laughs with us at our most
serious sonnets, weeps at our pratfalls. It
remembers us; it takes us back.

Finally, this blessed beer, it eases us towards
sleep.

A Traveller

He got off the freeway at the nearest ramp.
Fumbling in his pocket for change
he asked the porcelain attendant,
"How much you getting for a gallon these days?"
"A dollar-ten a pint," the other replied,
never once cracking a smile.
"My God!" the man exclaimed,
only then remembering that there
was no longer any God, or even,
for that matter, any California.
He drove wildly from the station,
the standard man still grinning horribly
in the rear-view mirror.
Back on the freeway he pressed it to the floor
and searched the billboards for a familiar sign.
Why had he failed to notice it before --
every single phosphorescent square read:
"You Are Already There!"
except the last which grinned "Ha Ha."

And why were there no other cars on the road?
How long had he been on the road?
Had he ever been to California?
Why was the gas gauge rising to full?

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach, California